

Evening Telegraph

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TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 1893.

ARE ALCOHOLIC LIQUORS NECESSARY AS MEDICINES?

We devote considerable space to the publication of a report recently made by two prominent physicians, under the direction of the Medical Society of Pennsylvania, which strongly condemns the common practice of prescribing stimulants. It elaborates the theory that although this system of treatment is unnecessary, it is so nearly universal that it sends its victims daily by thousands prematurely to the grave, and fills our land with drunkards and crime. These allegations are of such a startling and important nature that the grounds on which they are based deserve the attentive consideration of the general public, and of all who are interested in the welfare of their families, as well as the medical profession. The report says: "Every physician whom we know personally, all of whom we have heard, and recommend the use of alcoholic liquors in some form in their practice. The great majority use them freely in trifling as well as grave cases; on drunkards as well as on the total abstinence people; on the child of a day and the parent of threescore and ten." As they are prescribed as a preventive as well as a cure, and administered in nearly every disease, the authors of the report contend that the appetite which proves so terribly injurious in numberless cases is thus created by the advice and direction of men specially charged with the preservation of health. Authorities for this practice are, of course, not wanting, and it seems that some of the approved modern medical works extol the various alcoholic preparations into great specifics which alone can cure the ills that flesh is heir to. While this theory is systematically applied in numberless cases no temperance agitation can make a deep and lasting impression upon the community. Families who are constantly admonished by those whose opinions command profound respect that brandy, wine, whisky, gin, bitters, and malt liquors are highly useful to ward off disease from sound constitutions, absolutely necessary to build up enfeebled frames, and the best of medicines to cure disease, will pay little heed to the declamations of the champions of total abstinence. One quiet word from the family physician will prove infinitely more potent than the long orations of a Gough or a Father Matthew. What is most surprising is that the increased use of liquors as a medicine seems to have kept pace with the progress of the prohibitory agitation, and that their condemnation in the lecture-room and the pulpit was instantly followed by the increased popularity of the stimulant treatment among physicians. There is little doubt that this popularity has been carried to undue lengths, and that many doctors are now in the habit of prescribing liquors in cases where, without even effecting transient good, they do great permanent harm. As there was at one time a rage for the lancet, and at another for calomel, so there is now an undue prominence given to liquors as remedial agents; and if all the conclusions of the report are not accepted, it will be fortunate for the country if it exercises, even in a moderate degree, a restraining influence upon the practitioners who are characterized as "worsippers" of the fancied utility of alcohol as a medicine.

The main question, however, after all, is whether liquors are really necessary as medicines. On this point there is an evident conflict of authority, and while much has been written of their advantages, their scientific antagonists are comparatively few in number. Many warnings have been made against a too frequent prescription of stimulants by the profession, and the evil results of excessive drinking are conceded on all hands; but few physicians have dared to banish alcoholic preparations from their list of remedies. We are told, however, that such a course is not altogether without precedent, and some very respectable authorities are cited to sanction it. The renowned Dr. Benjamin Rush, of this city, was one of the first to speak against the use of alcoholic stimulants; Professor Chapman declared it to be the duty of every physician to "discontinue the baneful notion of their remedial efficacy;" and Professor Gross now takes similar ground. Professor Seward, of Washington, alleges that "there is no case in which ardent spirits are indispensable, and for which there is not an adequate substitute." Several physicians are cited who in a long professional career successfully treated every form of disease without using alcoholic remedies in a single instance. And the report adduces the opinions and researches of a number of eminent medical writers to prove that alcohol does not possess the healing and nourishing virtues which have been theoretically ascribed to it.

In view of the manifold evils of intemperance, this whole subject deserves more attentive consideration than it has hitherto received. The theories on which the doctors still disagree should be subjected, as far as possible, to the most searching experiments. If it is indeed true that alcoholic preparations are never necessary as a medicine, that fact is of the highest importance to mankind, and its establishment by indisputable proofs would do more than anything else to hasten the reform which thousands of physicians are slow to adopt.

THE EMPEROR AND THE SITUATION.

Two despatches from Paris that are published this morning, are significant of the present situation of affairs in France and of the agitated condition of society brought about by recent political developments. A suspicious character was discovered prowling about Compiègne, where the Emperor is at present residing, and on being taken in charge by the police he was found to be armed, and frankly acknowledged that his intention was to assassinate the Emperor. It is well that he did not succeed even in making the attempt, for he would then have given a fresh pretext to the supporters of the Napoleonic despotism to crush out at all hazards the incipient revolution that is even now beginning to make the empire tremble. As it is, this would-be assassin will doubtless be held up as an example of the influence of the teachings of the advocates of republicanism, and the frustrated attempt of a single crazy fanatic be used as an argument to strengthen the imperial position. That the empire needs strengthening is evident. The Emperor is sick, and it is even said that it is almost impossible that he can live more than a few months longer, and the "Reds" are getting bolder as the hand that has so long firmly held the reins of power begin to grow feeble. Rochefort has not only been permitted to return to Paris under a special safe conduct from the Emperor, but he has been received with the utmost enthusiasm, and we are told that he was accompanied to his hotel by a crowd of fifteen thousand citizens, crying "Vive Rochefort!" This, added to the attempt on the Emperor's life, and to the somewhat remarkable statement that no arrests were made by the police on account of the demonstration in Rochefort's honor, indicates a curious state of affairs. Has Rochefort consented to extinguish his *Lanterne*, and to cease from his bitter gibes against the Emperor, Empress, the imperial family, and all the prominent supporters of imperialism? or has Napoleon come to the conclusion that the safest and wisest plan is to let this agitator alone, and allow him to talk as freely as he pleases? Such a course at one time would probably have been in the highest degree prudent; but after the policy that has been for so long a time adopted towards such men as Rochefort, and all outspoken members of the press, it may well be doubted whether the time has not passed for conciliation. The public mind is in a ferment, and an occasion and pretext are only needed to start a revolution that will send the second empire after the republics, monarchies, and empires that have preceded it. Revolutions in France have not in the past been so successful in reforming abuses that any one will delight in seeing another attempt in the same direction; and we can only hope, but scarcely expect, that both of the contending parties will be inspired by that spirit of moderation and true patriotism that will enable them to reconcile existing difficulties without violence or bloodshed.

JOHN ALBION ENTERPRISES.—The passion for stimulants now appears to be a mania with some people, and as nine out of ten that are started usually fail to command sufficient support to warrant their continuance, it generally proves to be a rather expensive mania. The people to whom these enterprises appeal for support are prompted by but one motive in rendering it. If they think they get their money's worth they will buy the second copy, and not otherwise. A few who are now starting a penny paper was started in this city, and the question of its continued publication will depend entirely upon the manner in which it meets the demand of the people for news. Thus far the *Day* has displayed considerable enterprise and given satisfaction to its readers. If it continues an enterprising and successful in the future as during the first week of its existence, it will doubtless become an established and profitable institution. But the *Day* is not to have the field entirely to itself. The air is full of rumors of projected journalistic ventures, some of which have been talked about in certain circles for so long a time that there must be something serious at the bottom of the rumors. Prominent among the new ventures is the penny daily which it is understood Mr. William M. Swain will commence to publish on the first of the New Year. Mr. Swain is a son of one of the founders of the *Public Ledger*, and inherits his father's enterprise, and perhaps his tact. It is said that this new journal will be issued from the old *Ledger* building, at the corner of Third and Chestnut streets. A new afternoon paper, under the management of Charles McClintock, late of the *Post*, is talked of. The *Sunday Evening* has recently changed hands, and under its new management will doubtless take a stride towards increased enterprise and prosperity. Colonel John H. Taggart, well known in this city as the former collector of Internal Revenue in the First Congressional District, has become the proprietor of the *Times*, and is well fitted by his newspaper experience to make it a readable and attractive sheet.

A Comprehensive Editorial. The *Pall Mall Gazette* has a very able analysis of an editorial article which lately appeared in the *London Daily Telegraph*. "It is obviously the work of only one man; it is not longer that such treatises usually are; and it contains references to the following personages:—Anselm, Zenobia, Richard Coeur de Lion, Pope, Isaac of Cyprus, Voltaire, Fontenay, Filale, Leibnitz, Cagliostro, a small, Caliphina, Constantine, John Milton, Abdul Casar, Haxthausen, Napoleon I., Napoleon II., Count Algebrist, Hook, Peter the Great, Mr. Clark, Mahon, Sir Isaac Newton, the little dog Diamond, Haman, the Czar Nicholas, the Czar Alexander, Huyghens, Carlye, Catherine of Russia, Hippocrates, John Evelyn, the Duke of Salinas, Mme Krudner, the Prophetess, and the late Mr. Button. Reference also is made to the Phantoms, the Stanzas, the Talliannus, the Tullies, the Campanian steps, the Suez Canal, Tear-stone Cole, Sayes Court, the Chaussee d'Antin, Room, Hyde Park, Smolensk, South Kensington, and various other persons and places. Also, to Mohammedanism, the Master of the Mint, Palais Royal dinners, great exhibitions, pickled cucumbers, the Peace of Paris, slavery, Lafcadio, Lancastrian schools, and many other things of the kind. The object of the article apparently, we admit that it is quite a matter of opinion) is to establish the following assumption—that for her own self, in 1870, Russia will not derogate from the industrial celebrity she has already attained, but will continue to show the nations that she produces something more than fallow, hemp, and hides."

Another Label Suit. We learn from the last number of *Father Abraham* that Andrew Armstrong, Esq., an ex-member of the Legislature, and lately a candidate for nomination for the State Senate, has sued Messrs. Rauch & Cochran, the proprietors of that paper, for libel. The alleged libel, it is understood, consists of the statements made by the defendants some time ago, that as a member of the Legislature Mr. Armstrong drew mileage of \$1000 per session, and that he was now residing in only thirty miles from Harrisburg, and the proper mileage only nine dollars. The editors of *Father Abraham* say they are ready for trial, and express a desire to have the matter settled at the earliest possible day. If Mr. Armstrong has been falsely charged, there certainly can be no difficulty in proving the fact; but if he is guilty, while his residence is only thirty miles from Harrisburg, and the proper mileage only nine dollars. 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